

**Pacific Coast Guard Memorial Dedication  
The Punchbowl  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
18 January 2008**

Aloha and Mahalo nui loa - Thank you all for being here.

Thank you Governor Lingle, Senator Akaka, Mayor Hannemann, and thank you to the many people who have been so generous in their support of this Memorial.

We in the United States Coast Guard are blessed by this extraordinary event, this extraordinary venue and the extraordinary veterans who, through their courage, wrote our proud history.

It is a fitting tribute that this War Memorial is located here at the Punchbowl – the “Hill of Sacrifice” – *puowaina*.

There are no better words to describe what this monument represents.

66 years ago today, the world as we knew it was turned upside down.

Americans on the east and west coasts were stunned as they heard the broadcast –

"Japan has drawn first blood - Pearl Harbor is under attack."  
7 December became the day that would live in infamy.

The War had reached American Soil with the most massive force in the history of the world behind it.

There was no question. America was unified in its resolve. The required action was clear, the way difficult. The cause never in doubt.

Once again, the Coast Guard went to war. We deployed to all fronts and proved our worth. But it was in the ships and landing craft of the

amphibious forces where the Coast Guard played one of the most important roles in allied victory - getting the assault troops to the beaches and providing reinforcements and support.

As historian, Dr. Robert Browning, stated –

The handling of small craft in the surf was a specialized skill and not common in the Navy. Not so for the Coast Guard. Many of the coxswains had learned boat handling in the surf at lifesaving stations. In fact, Coast Guard coxswains from lifesaving stations were the most seasoned small-boat handlers in the military. Because only experienced coxswain could successfully maneuver landing craft through strong currents, reefs, sand bars and heavy surf, their contributions to amphibious operations are immeasurable.

We saw his words come alive on the beaches of Normandy.  
And in the Pacific Theatre on Wake Island, in Guam, in Midway, in Guadalcanal –

Ordinary men doing extraordinary things -

Coast Guard boat-crews worked day and night transporting troops to shore. They unloaded their craft on the beaches while under fire from snipers. The coxswains and crews worked for days on end without sleeping, never leaving their boats even to eat. Coffee and food was lowered to them on lines from transports, as they held fast in the lagoons - all the while being attacked by random fire from shore.

They persevered, they landed, many were lost, more survived, and they prevailed, but not without loss.

Today, we honor the men and women who brought our world back from the abyss.

You were a generation who grew up enduring the hardships of the Great Depression and then fought the most destructive war in history.

When it mattered most, you gave the best years of your lives to the greatest mission this country has ever accepted.

You paved the way for those of us here today.

You charted the course for our Coast Guard (active duty, reserve, civilian, retired) ... men and women serving across the country and around the world today.

You served in many very different ways.

*During World War II, **Senator Akaka** served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, including service on Saipan and Tinian. Returning from the war, he became an educator and fought injustice at home – always standing for what is right - from his military service to his decades as a public servant. He has tremendous fortitude and tenacity.*

We are humbled by the presence of several other Coast Guard Pacific War veterans. I'd like to highlight a few.

Wallace Shipp was a pharmacist's mate serving aboard the CALLAWAY. He was awarded a Bronze Star when the cutter was attacked by a kamikaze plane, killing 31 shipmates and wounding 15. He treated an army soldier while under fire.

Wallace, you are an inspiration to all of us here today.

I understand we also have a TANEY sailor present – George Larsen – who intercepted Japanese military messages, Orange Code, as a radio operator in World War II. George, thank you for your service, and I look forward to reading your book “On the Edge of War.”

Genevieve Anderson was a member of a 10,000 unit force that many Americans did not learn about until recently. She was a SPAR during World War II - volunteering her service to the Coast Guard in the only way she could as a woman in those times. I understand you are still looking for new challenges, even piloting your own aircraft around the islands.

Genni, thank you for your dedication and selfless service.

Mrs. Fitch, thank you for coming to honor your husband's distinguished service. I don't know too many men who can say that they didn't just serve during the war, but also represented the Coast Guard as a boxer. I am sorry I never met him.

There are two very important people that are not mustered with us today. In recent months, we lost two incredible patriots who etched personal stories into our Service's legacy.

Ray O'Malley passed away in Chicago. He was one of only two ESCANABA crewmembers to survive its sinking by an enemy submarine in 1943 in the North Atlantic. 103 of his shipmates were lost that day.

Marvin Perret served as a landing craft coxswain at Omaha Beach in Normandy and then served in the invasion of Iwo Jima. Marvin spent his life keeping Coast Guard history alive and his legacy remains in the Higgins Boat exhibit in the World War II Museum in New Orleans. Last year, Marvin gave me this bosun pipe lanyard he made himself – it represents his spirit here tonight.

Regardless of the role each played, every member of this generation left an enduring legacy of resilience, patriotism and devotion to duty that lives in today's heroes.

It is seen in places not envisioned in your youth.

For Coast Guardsmen it was seen in the Korean War ...Rescuing pilots and aircrews on Navy reconnaissance aircraft shot down in the South China Sea.

In Viet Nam ...Small boats caught in cross fires during riverine operations in the Mekong Delta,

The interdiction of arms in Operation Market Time

Gunfire Support from cutters in the Gulf of Tonkin,

Later it was seen in the operations of our  
Port Security Units in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in the first Gulf War

And in Maritime Interception Operations in the Gulf of Aqaba enforcing the  
Iraqi quarantine between wars.

In 2004, in defending the oil platforms of the Northern Arabian Gulf where  
Nate Bruckenthal and his Navy shipmates Michael Pernaselli and  
Christopher Watts positioned their boat to confront an oncoming terrorist  
vessel only to have an improvised explosive device detonated.

A new generation, a new sacrifice ... We understand, we are grateful, we are  
inspired.

I'd like to close with a short story about my father ...

As many of you know, my father is a retired Coast Guard Chief and World  
War II veteran.

He is right here front and center, and so I'm dimming him out.

What we try to keep as a family secret is his love for singing ... any time,  
any where, any place.

This made for interesting cross country trips as we moved between duty  
stations.

With limited radio reception in those days, the trick was to entertain  
ourselves by singing.

Given the number of transfers we have had over the years this allowed for  
the development of quite a repertoire.

In fact, I knew all of the verses to Semper Paratus by the time I learned to  
read.

One of my father's favorite songs was released in 1942 and became the first true country cross-over hit, selling 4 million records and topping the Hit Parade.

The song remains to this day a haunting, country anthem about war and patriotism.

The title was "There's a Star Spangled Banner Waiving Somewhere."

"Somewhere" in this case meant heaven or a kind of Valhalla ... where heroes go when they die.

The singer longs to join the fight as says in the second verse,

"In this war with its mad schemes of destruction  
Of our country fair and our sweet liberty,  
By the mad dictators, leaders of corruption,  
Can't the U.S. use a mountain boy like me?  
God gave me the right to be a free American,  
And for that precious right I'd gladly die.  
There's a Star-Spangled Banner waiving somewhere,  
That is where I want to live when I die."

The Coast Guard found that mountain boy in Cle Elum, Washington.

His name was Douglas Munro.

A Third Class Signalman, Munro volunteered for duty in an assault force assigned to land in Solomon Islands.

In September 1942 he led a group of landing craft which placed 500 marines ashore on Guadalcanal.

Later the marines came under intense fire from Japanese forces and were forced to retreat to water's edge with option for escape.

Munro led the landing craft back to the beach and in the face of withering fire evacuated the marines and their wounded.

As the last boat departed he placed his boat between the fleeing craft and enemy fire, providing cover until he was mortally wounded.

His last words were, “did they make it off?”

Well Petty Officer Munro, they did make it off and every year the United States Marine Corps celebrates your birthday.

There is even a Coast Guard Cutter that carries your name.

One last thing Petty Officer Munro.

You never knew, but you earned the Congressional Medal of Honor that day and you are certainly in that “somewhere” and there IS a Star-Spangled Banner waiving.

Pass on our regards to Ray O’Malley and Marvin Perrett, they are in good company.

Coast Guard Veterans of the Pacific, we honor you today. Each and every member of the Coast Guard pays tribute to your courage, your sacrifices and selflessness that became our legacy.

You inspire us, and we pledge to pass your torch to the next generation.

Semper Paratus!